Numb. LI.

The SPECTATOR.

Torquet ab Obscenis jam nunc Sermonibus Aurem! Hor.

Saturday, April 28. 1711.

Mr. SPECTATOR,

MY Fortune, Quality and Person, are such as render me as Conspicuous as any Young Woman in Town. It is in my Power to enjoy it in all its Vanities, but I have, from a very careful Education, contracted a great Aversion to the forward Air and Mien which is practised in all Publick Places and Assemblies. I attribute this very much to the Loose Manners of our Plays: I was last Night at the *Funeral*, where a Confident Lover in the Play, speaking of his Mistress, Cries out—*Oh the Charms! to fold those Arms about the Waste of that Beauteous struggling, and at last yielding Fair!* Such an Image as this ought, by no means, to be presented to a Chaste and Regular Audience. I desire your Opinion of this Sentence, and recommend to your Consideration, as a SPECTATOR, the Conduct of the Stage at present, with Relation to Chastity and Modesty.

I am, SIR,

Your Constant Reader,

and Well-Wisher.

The Complaint of this Young Lady is so just, the Offence is gross enough to have displeased Persons who cannot pretend to that Delicacy and Modesty, of which she is Mistress. But there is a great deal to be said in Behalf of an Author; if the Audience would but consider the Difficulty of keeping up a Sprightly Dialogue for five Acts together, they would allow a Writer, when he wants Wit, to endeavour to please any otherwise, to help it out with a little Smuttiness. I will answer for the Poets, that no one ever writ Bawdy for any other Reason but Barrenness of Invention. When the Author cannot bring out of himself any more of that which he has given to those who make up the Bulk of his Audience, his natural Recourse is to that which he has in common with them; and a Description which raises a Sensual Appetite will please, when the Author has nothing else to gratifie a refined Imagination. It is to such a Poverty we must impute all the other Sentences in Plays, which are of the same Kind, and which are commonly term'd Luscious Expressions.

This Expedient, to supply the Deficiences of Wit, has been used, more or less, by most of the Authors who have succeeded on the Stage; tho' I know but one who has professedly writ a Play upon the Basis of the Desire of Multiplying our Species, and that is the Polite Sir *George Etherege*; if I understand what the Lady would be at, in the Play called *She would if she could*. Other Poets have, here and there, given an Intimation that there is this Design, under all the Disguises and Affectations which a Lady may put on; but no Author, except this, has made sure Work of it, and put the Imaginations of the Audience upon this one Purpose, from the Beginning to the End of the Comedy. It has always fared accordingly; for whether it be, that all who go to this Piece would if they could, or that the Innocents go to it, to guess only what *She would if she could*, the Play has always been well received.

It lifts an heavy empty Sentence, when there is added to it a lascivious Gesture of Body; and when it is too low to be raised even by that, a flat Meaning is enlivened by making it a double one. Writers, who want *Genius*, never fail of keeping this Secret in reserve, to create a Laugh, or raise a Clap. I, who know nothing of Women but from seeing Plays, can give great Guesses at the whole Structure of the fair Sex, by being innocently placed in the Pitt, and Insulted by the Petticoats of their Dancers; the Advantages of whose pretty Persons are a great help to a dull Play. When a Poet flags in writing Lasciviously, a pretty Girl can move Lasciviously, and have the same good Consequence for the Author. Dull Poets in this Case use their Audiences, as dull Parasites do their Patrons; when they cannot longer divert him with their Wit or Humour, they bait his Ears with something which is agreeable to his Temper, though below his Understanding. *Apicius* cannot resist being pleased, if you give him an Account of a delicious Meal; or *Clodius*, if you describe a Wanton Beauty: Tho' at the same time, if you do not awake those Inclinations in them, no Men are better Judges of what is just and delicate in Conversation. But, as I have before observed, it is easier to talk to the Man, than to the Man of Sense.

It is remarkable, that the Writers of least Learning are best skill'd in the luscious Way. The Poetesses of the Age have done Wonders in this kind; and

and we are obliged to the Lady who writ *Ibrahim*, for introducing a preparatory Scene to the very Action, when the Emperor throws his Handkerchief as a Signal for his Miſtreſs to follow him into the moſt retired part of the Seraglio. It muſt be confeſſed his Turkiſh Majeſty went off with a good Air, but, methought, we made but a ſad Figure who waited without. This ingenious Gentlewoman, in this piece of Bawdry, refined upon an Author of the ſame Sex, who, in the *Rover*, makes a Country Squire ſtrip to his Holland Drawers. For *Blunt* is diſappointed, and the Emperor is underſtood to go on to the utmoſt. The Pleaſantry of Stripping almoſt Naked has been ſince practiſed (where indeed it ſhould have been begun) very ſucceſsfully at *Bartholomew* Fair.

It is not here to be omitted, that in one of the above-mentioned Female Compoſitions, the *Rover* is very frequently ſent on the ſame Errand; as I take it, above once every Act. This is not wholly unnatural, for, they ſay, the Men-Authors draw themſelves in their chief Characters, and the Women-Writers may be allow'd the ſame Liberty. Thus, as the Male Wit gives his Hero a great Fortune, the Female gives her Heroin a good Gallant at the end of the Play. But, indeed, there is hardly a Play one can go to, but the Hero or fine Gentleman of it ſtruts off upon the ſame account, and leaves us to conſider what good Office he has put us to, or to employ our ſelves as we pleaſe. To be plain, a Man who frequents Plays, would have a very reſpectful Notion of himſelf, were he to recollect how often he has been uſed as a Pimp to raviſhing Tyrants, or ſucceſsful Rakes. When the Actors make their *Exit* on this good Occaſion, the Ladies are ſure to have an examining Glance from the Pit, to ſee how they reliſh what paſſes, and a few lewd Fools are very ready to employ their Talents upon the Compoſure or Freedom of their Looks. Such Incidents as theſe make ſome Ladies wholly abſent themſelves from the Play-Houſe; and others never miſs the firſt Day of a Play, leſt it ſhould prove too luſcious to admit their going with any Countenance to it on the ſecond.

If Men of Wit, who think fit to write for the Stage, inſtead of this pitiful way of giving Delight, would turn their Thoughts upon raiſing it from good natural Impulſes as are in the Audience, but are Choaked up by Vice and Luxury, they would not only pleaſe, but befriend us at the ſame time. If a Man had a mind to be new in his way of Writing, might not he, who is now repreſented as a fine Gentleman, tho' he betrays the Honour and Bed of his Neighbour and Friend, and lyes with half the Women in the Play, and is at laſt rewarded with her of the beſt Character in it, I ſay, upon giving the Comedy another Caſt, might not ſuch a one divert the Audience quite as well, if at the Cataſtrophe he were found out for a Traytor, and met with Contempt accordingly. There is ſeldom a Perſon devoted to above one Darling Vice at a time, ſo that there is room enough to catch at Mens Hearts to their Good and Advantage, if the Poets will attempt it with the Honeſty which becomes their Characters.

There is no Man who loves his Bottle or his Miſtreſs, in a manner ſo very abandon'd, as not to be capable of reliſhing an agreeable Character, that is, no way a Slave to either of thoſe Purſuits. A Man that is Temperate, Generous, Valiant, Chaſte, Faithful and Honeſt, may, at the ſame time, have Wit, Honour, Mirth, good Breeding, and Gallantry. While he exerts theſe latter Qualities, twenty Occaſions might be invented to ſhew he is Maſter of the other noble Virtues. Such Characters wou'd ſmite and reprove the Heart of a Man of Senſe, when he is given up to his Pleaſures. He would ſee he has been miſtaken all this while, and be convinced that a ſound Conſtitution and an innocent Mind are the true Ingredients for becoming and enjoying Life. All Men of true Taſte would call a Man of Wit, who ſhould turn his Ambition this way, a Friend and Benefactor to his Country; but I am at a loſs what Name they would give him, who makes uſe of his Capacity for contrary Purpoſes.

ADVERTISEMENTS.

By her Majeſty's Company of Comedians.

AT the Theatre Royal in Drury-lane this preſent Saturday, will be preſented the true and ancient Hiſtory of King Lear. The part of King Lear to be perform'd by Mr. Powell, Edgar by Mr. Wilks, Gloucester by Mr. Cibber, Edmund by Mr. Mills, Kent by Mr. Keene, Gentleman-Uſher by Mr. Penkethman, and Cordelia by Mrs. Rogers. And on Monday next: (at the Deſire of ſeveral Ladies of Quality) will be preſented a Comedy, call'd, The Committee, or The Faithful Iriſh-Man, for the Benefit of Mr. Norris.

At the Deſire of ſeveral Ladies of Quality.
For the Benefit of Mrs. Bradſhaw.
By Her Majeſty's Company of Comedians.

AT the Theatre Royal in Drury-lane, on Tueſday next, the firſt of May, will be preſented a Play called, The Fatal Marriage, or The Innocent Adultery. The part of Iſabella to be performed by Mrs. Bradſhaw, Fernando by Mr. Dogget, Count Baldwin by Mr. Keene, Villeroy by Mr. Wilks, Biron by Mr. Booth, Carlos by Mr. Powell, Frederick by Mr. Mills, Sampſon by Mr. Bullock, Jaqueline by Mrs. Bowen, and Victoria by Mrs. Porter.

These Plays are ſold by Jacob Tonſon at Shakeſpear's Head over against Catherine-ſtreet in the Strand.

A Curious Collection of Pictures (moſt of which are lately come from Abroad) to be Sold by Auction on Tueſday the 1ſt of May, at 10 a-Clock in the Forenoon, at the Crown Tavern next Door but one to Mr. Thurlow's at the Fountain Tavern in the Strand; where they are to be ſeen from this Morning to the time of Sale, and Catalogues to be diſtributed out as above, : alſo at Mr. Charles Lillie's, Perfumer, at the Corner of Beauford Buildings in the Strand.

A very light ſecond-hand Chariot is to be Sold a great pennyworth, with or without a pair of Harneſs. Inquire of Mr. Holmes at the Bull Inn in Holborn, near the End of Hatton-Garden.

In a few Days will be Publiſh'd

The Life and Acts of Mathew Parker, the Firſt Archbiſhop of Canterbury in the Reign of Queen Elizabeth. Under whoſe Primacy and Influence the Reformation of Religion was happily Effected; and the Church of England Reſtored, and Eſtabliſhed upon the Principles whereon it ſtands to this Day. Wherein are related the ſaid Archbiſhop's Actions in Eccleſiaſtical Commiſſions and Synods; His Viſitation of the Dioceſes, Colleges and Hoſpitals within his Province, with his Injunctions and Regulations: Characters and Accounts of the Biſhops by him Conſecrated: His Endeavours for Uniformity: His Diligence in Reſtoring, and Publiſhing many Ancient and other Authentick Hiſtorical MSS. of this Nation: His Promoting a more correct Tranſlation of the Holy Bible: His Government of his own Dioceſs of Canterbury: His ſober Thoughts, Counſels and Cares for Religion and this Church: And many Particulars of Ecclesiaſtical Hiſtory of thoſe Times, hitherto Unknown, or very Obſcure, are diſcovered and brought to Light. Compiled Faithfully out of Records, Regiſters, State-Papers, Orders of Council, Authentick Letters, and ſundry other Original MSS. In Four Books. To which is added, An Appendix, containing various Tranſcripts of Records, Letters, Inſtruments, Ordinances, Commiſſions, Diſcourſes, Relations, Intelligences, and other ſecret Papers, above an Hundred in Number; for the Affording or Illuſtrating the foregoing Hiſtory. Among which will be found the Latin Life of this A. Bp. Extracted by Matthæus, ſo much and ſo long wanted in the Editions of the Britiſh Antiquities. By John Strype, M. A. Printed for John Wyat at the Roſe in St. Paul's Church-yard.

LONDON: Printed for *Sam. Buckley*, at the *Dolphin* in *Little-Britain*; and Sold by *A. Baldwin* in *Warwick-Lane*; where Advertiſements are taken in: as alſo by *Charles Lillie*, Perfumer, at the Corner of *Beauford-Buildings* in the *Strand*.